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ABSTRACT

A five-page English language survey instrument was developed by the Denton County (Texas) Parent Education Coalition to survey a sample of parents representing the economic, educational, and lifestyle diversity of the county. A Spanish-language version, a shortened two-page questionnaire, and an adapted interview form for handicapped and illiterate parents were also developed. The full-length English-language survey instrument contains 17 questions covering family demographics as well as parents' education interests, experiences, and learning preferences. A total of 740 parents from 30 randomly selected preschools participated in the survey. It was found that they considered: (1) family, books, and friends to be the most helpful sources of parenting information; (2) experiential learning, discussion, and reading to be their preferred methods of instruction; and (3) building their child's self-esteem and helping children do well in school to be the parenting topics of most interest. Results of the study are being used to plan parent education programs in the community. (The full-length English-language survey instrument is included.) (MDM)

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A Survey Instrument:
Assessment of Education Interests,
Experiences, and Learning Preferences
of Parents of Young Children

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A SURVEY INSTRUMENT: ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATION
INTERESTS, EXPERIENCES, AND LEARNING PREFERENCES
OF PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

An important step in serving parent education needs of families is understanding those families. A process will be described which has been utilized by the Denton County Parent Education Coalition to survey the parent education interests, experiences, and learning preferences of a sample of parents representing the economic, educational, and lifestyle diversity of the county.

The steps of the process include the (a) design of survey instruments, (b) development of a sampling strategy, (c) distribution and collection of surveys, (d) analysis, and (e) dissemination and interpretation of results to participating organizations. A five-page English-language survey instrument was developed which includes questions related to relevant demographic information as well as parent perceptions of their parent education interests, experiences, and learning preferences. In addition, a Spanish language version, a shortened 2-page questionnaire, and an adapted interview form for handicapped and illiterate parents were developed. Content of the survey instrument was based upon a review of literature as well as the goals

and objectives of the county-wide coalition.

The coalition states in their goals that a proactive position is preferable to a reactive position. The first goal is to strive to anticipate and assist in meeting the needs of parents in Denton County. To assess parent education needs in the county is stated as the first objective of the coalition.

In the development of the survey, the long form was pilot tested with a group of preschool parents. Revisions were based upon pilot participant feedback and expert opinions from content and evaluation experts.

Sample

Parents from 30 randomly selected preschools and child care centers completed a questionnaire which inquired about interests and preferences for parent education. Analysis of the data revealed that of the 740 participants, 679 were mothers. The sample included 10.5% from mother-headed families and 61.2% from families in which both the mother and father worked.

Summary of Responses

The sources of parenting information that the respondents found most helpful were: (a) family

(42.3%), (b) books (24.3%) (c) friends (18.9%), and (d) church (17.6%). The life experiences that respondents found most helpful in learning about being a parent were: (a) talking to friends or family (34.6%); (b) talking with another parent (31.6%); (c) reading a book or article (23.1%); (d) watching another parent (18.4%); and (e) attending a program or educational meeting (16.2%).

Experiential learning (54.2%), discussion (37.6%), and reading (34.6%) were the methods of instruction that the parent respondents preferred. The parenting topics of most interest to this group of parents of young children were (a) building your child's self esteem and (b) helping children do well in school. Other topics of high interest to this group of parents were: (a) helping children have good relationships; (b) effective discipline, and (c) talking with children.

Twenty six percent of the respondents had attended a class or program about parenting in the last year. Of those who had attended a program, the most common sponsors were church (12.2%) and public schools (8.8%). Ninety five percent of those who attended a program reported finding it helpful. Approximately 76% of those who had not previously attended a class expressed

an interest in participating.

Use of Results

Results of the study are being utilized by the parent education coalition and member organizations for coordination and planning of appropriate parent education programs. Participating early childhood programs have been provided findings related to parents in their programs. Educators, extension specialists, counselors, researchers, and public policy advocates are among those who may be interested in adapting this survey to meet their own needs.

1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____

PARENT SURVEY
DENTON COUNTY PARENT EDUCATION COALITION

The Denton County Parent Education Coalition is a group of people who are committed to improving life for children and families by providing information and opportunities for parents to learn more about children and find support for parenting.

Please take a few minutes of your time to complete this survey so the Coalition can work more closely with parents in planning.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FAMILY

(5-6) 1. Where do you live?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 01 ____ Aubrey | 08 ____ Hebron | 15 ____ Little Elm |
| 02 ____ Argyle | 09 ____ Hickory Shores | 16 ____ Northlake |
| 03 ____ Bartonville | 10 ____ Highland Village | 17 ____ Pilot Point |
| 04 ____ Carrollton | 11 ____ Justin | 18 ____ Ponder |
| 05 ____ Corinth | 12 ____ Krum | 19 ____ Roanoke |
| 06 ____ Denton | 13 ____ Lake Dallas | 20 ____ Sanger |
| 07 ____ Flower Mound | 14 ____ Lewisville | 21 ____ The Colony |
| 22 ____ Other/Rural (Location _____) | | |

(7) 2. Check your *MAIN* role. *Who you are in the family?*

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 ____ mother | 3 ____ grandmother | 5 ____ stepmother | 7 ____ other (Explain _____) |
| 2 ____ father | 4 ____ grandfather | 6 ____ stepfather | |

(8-16) 3. Which of the following best describes your family? Check all that apply to you.

- 08 ____ Two-parent family: One parent does not work outside the home
- 09 ____ Two-parent family: Both parents work outside the home
- 10 ____ Single parent: Father head
- 11 ____ Single parent: Mother head
- 12 ____ Step parent
- 13 ____ Foster parent
- 14 ____ Adoptive parent
- 15 ____ Grandparent rearing grandchildren
- 16 ____ Other (Explain _____)

(17-19) 4. Which language(s) do you speak at home?

- 17 ____ Spanish 18 ____ English 19 ____ Other (Name _____)

(20) 5. Mark the category which most closely describes your ethnic background.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1 ____ Caucasian | 3 ____ Hispanic | 5 ____ Other _____ |
| 2 ____ African American | 4 ____ Asian | |

(21-26) 6. What are the number and ages of the children in your family? Please write the number of children you have in each category. [For example: "3 to 5 years olds.....2"(number of children)]

<u>Ages of Children</u>	<u>Number of Children</u>
Prenatal/Birth to 17 months old	21 _____
18 months to 3 years old	22 _____
Over 3 to 5 years old	23 _____
Over 5 to 8 years old	24 _____
Over 8 to 12 years old	25 _____
Over 12 to 19 years old	26 _____

(27-28) 7. What are you and your spouse's HIGHEST level of educational experience?

<u>Education</u>	(27) <u>You</u>	(28) <u>Spouse</u>
No formal schooling	1 _____	1 _____
Completed elementary school	2 _____	2 _____
Attended high school	3 _____	3 _____
Graduated from high school	4 _____	4 _____
Attended trade/vocational school	5 _____	5 _____
Attended college	6 _____	6 _____

PARENTING EDUCATION INFORMATION

(29-37) 8. Who or what helps you in being a parent? Circle a number from 5 to 1 with 5 the most helpful to you. Rate all the items below. Circle the "X" if you have NO EXPERIENCE with the form of parent education.

	VERY HELPFUL	HELPFUL	SOMEWHAT HELPFUL	A LITTLE HELPFUL	NOT HELPFUL	NO EXPERIENCE
(29)family	5	4	3	2	1	X
(30)friends	5	4	3	2	1	X
(31)counselors	5	4	3	2	1	X
(32)teachers	5	4	3	2	1	X
(33)church	5	4	3	2	1	X
(34)television	5	4	3	2	1	X
(35)newspapers	5	4	3	2	1	X
(36)books	5	4	3	2	1	X
(37)other (Explain _____)	5	4	3	2	1	X

(38-44) 9. How helpful do you find each of the following in learning about being a parent? Rate all the items below. Circle a number from 5 to 1 with 5 the most helpful to you. Circle the "X" if you have NO EXPERIENCE with this form of parent education.

	VERY HELPFUL	HELPFUL	SOMEWHAT HELPFUL	A LITTLE HELPFUL	NOT HELPFUL	NO EXPERIENCE
(38)watching another parent	5	4	3	2	1	X
(39)watching TV/or video	5	4	3	2	1	X
(40)reading a book or article	5	4	3	2	1	X
(41)attending a program or educational meeting	5	4	3	2	1	X
(42)talking to friends or family	5	4	3	2	1	X
(43)talking with a parent	5	4	3	2	1	X
(44)other	5	4	3	2	1	X

(Explain _____)

(45-49) 10. How do you like to learn best? Rate all the items below. Circle a number from 5 to 1 with 5 the best method for you. Circle the "X" if you have NO EXPERIENCE with the form of parent education.

	MOST LIKE	LIKE	NEITHER NOR LIKE	DISLIKE	MOST DISLIKE	NO EXPERIENCE
(45)lectures or talks	5	4	3	2	1	X
(46)reading	5	4	3	2	1	X
(47)discussion	5	4	3	2	1	X
(48)doing	5	4	3	2	1	X
(49)other	5	4	3	2	1	X

(Explain _____)

(50-65) 11. Rate the parenting topics from most interest to least interest. 5 is of most interest.

	MOST INTEREST	STRONG INTEREST	SOME INTEREST	LITTLE INTEREST	NO INTEREST
(50)helping children have good relationships	5	4	3	2	1
(51)effective discipline	5	4	3	2	1
(52)what to expect from children at different ages	5	4	3	2	1
(53)activities for children at different ages	5	4	3	2	1
(54)building your child's self esteem	5	4	3	2	1
(55)helping children do well in school	5	4	3	2	1
(56)preparation for parenting	5	4	3	2	1
(57)nutrition, health and safety	5	4	3	2	1
(58)child care choices	5	4	3	2	1
(59)talking with children	5	4	3	2	1
(60)single parenting	5	4	3	2	1
(61)step parenting	5	4	3	2	1
(62)drug and alcohol abuse	5	4	3	2	1
(63)money management	5	4	3	2	1
(64)managing work and family	5	4	3	2	1
(65)other (Explain _____)	5	4	3	2	1

(66) 12. Have you attended a class, group, or program about being a parent or which taught parenting skills in the last year?

1 ___ YES 2 ___ NO (Skip to #16)

(67-77) 13. If you answered YES to question #12, please check all the sponsors of programs that you have attended.

- (67) ___ child care center
- (68) ___ public schools
- (69) ___ church
- (70) ___ parent organization
- (71) ___ hospital
- (72) ___ counseling/mental health center
- (73) ___ college or university class for credit
- (74) ___ high school class for credit
- (75) ___ County Extension Service
- (76) ___ community organization (Name 10)
- (77) ___ other (Name _____)

(78) 14. Was your attendance in a class, group or program for parents helpful?

1 ___ YES 2 ___ NO

If your answer to question #14 is YES, answer #15. If your answer to question #14 is NO, skip to question #17.

(79) 15. How helpful was your attendance in a class, group or program? Circle a number from 5 to 1 with 5 the most helpful.

VERY HELPFUL	HELPFUL	SOMEWHAT HELPFUL	A LITTLE HELPFUL	NOT HELPFUL
5	4	3	2	1

Skip to #17.

(80) 16. If you answered NO to question #12, would you be interested in participating in a class, group, or program for parents in the future?

1 ___ YES 2 ___ NO

17. Please list below happenings, situations, circumstances, events, etc., which keeps you from being the parent you would like to be?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Please return this survey form.

Are you interested in receiving further information about parent education or school involvement in Denton County? Contact: Barbara Fowler, Denton County Extension Home Economist, (817) 566-3607 or METRO 434-2052.

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